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**A Discussion of some of the Trials and Judicial Proceedings Mentioned in the New Testament.\***

The sacred writers were not acquainted with legal forms. They do not use technical terms. But they are correct as to the substance of their statements. 1. The chief trials and judicial proceedings mentioned by them are begun by the judicial murder of John the Baptist. Herod Antipas desirous of greater influence and popularity weds the Maccabean princess Herodias, a divorced wife. But John the Baptist in denouncing this marriage is liable to destroy his hopes. Legally John is guilty of high treason. But Herod tries to win him over to his side and not put him to death. This policy was shattered by the plan of Herodias. 2. The trial and condemnation of Jesus. Pilate had the powers of a supreme court. When Jesus was brought before him, Pilate was not moved by sympathy for him or awed by his divinity. The single fact that caused him to endeavor to save Jesus and have Barabbas condemned was that he was acting in a judicial capacity and as such if he was unjust to Jesus who, as he saw, was innocent of crime against Roman law, he would be reported to the emperor as having condemned an innocent man and released a dangerous traitor. So only when Pilate saw that there was danger of an insurrection did he order the execution of Jesus, for whom as a man of purity and a teacher of truth he did not care. 3. Persecution of Christians. The reason why the Sanhedrin exercises the powers of life and death in the stoning of Stephen, etc., is explained by secular history. When Pilate is ordered to Rome, the Sanhedrin is given autonomous powers by the governor of Syria. At once they persecute Christians. When a Roman legate is re-appointed they cease and the church has rest. When Herod is made king the persecution begins again. When he dies and a Roman officer returns the Christians are comparatively secure. 4. Paul before Agrippa. The desire of the Romans to give Jews home-rule and yet to protect Roman citizens explains the treatment of Paul by Felix and Festus. Festus called Herod Agrippa to give him advice about Paul's case. The latter is the real judge and is addressed by Paul in a full and complete defence, so ardent that the king cuts him short with a mild rebuke. 5. Paul before Gallio. Here the Jews are very differently treated. Gallio has no need to be politic. He hears only the accusation and dismisses it as puerile. He cannot be accused of being indifferent to the Gospel for he did not hear Paul's defence. He decrees that the perjurers be whipped but permits the prisoner's friends to do it. He shared the universal hatred of all the Jews and enjoyed the spicy joke. 6. Paul at Athens. This city and its institutions were peculiarly honored by Roman emperors. The court of the Areopagus among other duties had a censorship over the conduct of citizens. They were particularly careful about religion and impiety. The views that Paul was tried by this court or that he was taken to Mar's hill as a convenient place in which to hear him are both wrong. They were judicially inquiring into his teaching. This is proved : 1) by the character of his speech, skillfully formed to avoid accusation ; 2) by his failure to establish a church there ; 3) by his sudden departure, his statement was not satisfactory to the court but contained no ground for a further trial and condemnation.

An admirable theme for a popular and informing article. The writer's views are in some points new and quite satisfactory. It is not quite certain that he makes out his case in relation to Pilate. Sufficient credit is not given to the statements of the evangelists, who in his opinion may have misunderstood the motives of Roman governors. But were they not much more likely to apprehend these motives clearly and undoubtedly than a writer of the present day may be expected to discover and analyze them ?

\* By Kemp B. Battle, D.D., in *Christian Thought*, April, 1889, pp. 321-353.